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ABSTRACT

Instead of looking at the impact of specific third party actions or behaviors on negotiation outcomes, the authors studied the effects of anticipated intervention on the negotiation process. Third party power (ability to force an agreement on deadlocked negotiations or merely recommend one) and generalized reputation (favorable or unfavorable) were manipulated in a laboratory experiment to determine their effects on negotiator behavior, perceptions, attributions, and satisfactions. Questionnaires were used in measuring the latter three categories of results. Reliable differences in pre-intervention impact of third party agents possessing differential power were found. One such finding was that those anticipating a high power agent felt more pressure during bargaining and took longer to reach agreement than those in the low power condition. With regard to perceptions, significant and consistent interactions between third party power and reputation were also found. In sum, this study demonstrates the importance of constituent forces on negotiator behavior. (SJL)

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Third Party Characteristics and
Intergroup Conflict Resolution

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Problem

Conflict between groups is often resolved through the use of spokesmen or representatives. Recent work of both a theoretical (e.g., McGrath, 1966) and empirical (e.g., Klimoski, 1972) nature has stressed the forces operating on representatives as they strive to reach agreement. These forces are often contradictory and demanding, making conflict resolution difficult. In trying to cope with these forces a number of authors (e.g., Walton, 1969) have advocated the use of third parties to serve special functions in negotiation settings. In these formulations third party agents would reduce some of the pressures on representatives and allow them to become the advocates that their constituencies demand (Pruitt & Johnson, 1970).

The study to be described focuses on third party agents and their characteristics. However, instead of looking at the impact of specific third party actions or behaviors on negotiation outcomes it examines the effects of anticipated intervention on the negotiation process. Specifically, it builds upon the research of Vidmar (1971), Johnson and Pruitt (1972), and Johnson and Teller (1972) which suggests pre-intervention effects of third party agents with differing characteristics. The present study goes beyond previous work by looking at the traditional variable of third party power (ability to force an agreement on deadlocked negotiations or merely recommend one) in combination with third party generalized reputation (favorable or unfavorable) in a laboratory experiment to determine their effects on negotiator behavior, perceptions, attributions, and satisfaction.

Hypotheses

Previous research on the impact of the power variable has generated complex results; while Johnson and Pruitt (1972) found that impending arbitration (high power) produced more conciliation and greater rate of agreement between negotiators, Johnson and Tullar (1972) noted this only occurred if there was little need for the negotiator to save face or "look good." When evaluation apprehension was stressed, however, those representatives facing no third party (control) were most likely to reach agreement. Furthermore, in the high face-saving condition, high and low power agents did not have a differential impact. The present study used actual groups to develop a position and made salient the existence of a constituency (an improvement over previous work); it invoked high accountability (high face saving) for all negotiators (i.e., they all had to face their teams with the outcome). Blake (1959), Blake and Mouton (1961, 1962), McGrath (1966) and others have stressed the impact of constituency pressures on the negotiator. Consistent with these authors and contrary to Johnson and Tullar¹ (1972) it was hypothesized that: those negotiators anticipating third parties with binding powers would have a more difficult time in negotiations (e.g., take longer to reach an agreement, have more deadlocks, report more bargaining difficulty) than spokesmen facing a low power third party. Furthermore, drawing on the interpersonal attraction literature, it was felt that negotiators anticipating a low reputation third party would have less bargaining difficulty than spokesmen facing a high reputation third party (Berscheid & Walster, 1969).

¹These authors manipulated power in three ways. Their arbitration condition differed somewhat from the high power induction employed in this study. However, Johnson and Tullar's (1972) "govplan" manipulation was operationalized similarly. Results for the govplan manipulation and this study's high power induction are consistent.

Method

The study could be described as a 2 x 2 factorial experiment with 12 pairs of undergraduate subjects (dyads) per cell. Using a procedure developed by Klimoski (1972, 1974) subjects (randomly assigned to conditions and teams) generated a solution to a survival problem in two three-man teams. They had thirty minutes in which to do this. Following team solution development, through careful arrangements, each subject was led to believe he was the sole negotiator for his team (chosen randomly by the experimenter) and that he would return to face them after bargaining. All subjects, in fact, were paired with a counterpart from the other team to negotiate a joint mutually acceptable solution to the same problem for a maximum of six five-minute intervals, after which a deadlock would be called should no agreement be reached. Just prior to bargaining and for two intervals, subjects were informed that a third party with a specified type of power (to recommend or to force a solution) and who had been evaluated by the subjects' peers (on a personality checklist in a previous unrelated experiment) as favorable (attractive) or unfavorable (unattractive) might enter. He would be called in by the experimenter at an unspecified time (but not before the third interval) if bargaining was not productive.

In the high power condition this third party agent would choose the solution of one of the negotiators and require that the other report his failure to his constituency. In the low power condition this agent would work with the negotiators for a period of time to try to reach an agreement. The experimenter never actually called for intervention; thus, the anticipation of third party intervention could be studied as it impacted on the negotiation process.

Results

Several classes of questionnaire measures were taken, dealing with the instructions, satisfaction, perceptions and attributions. A 2 x 2 ANOVA was used to analyze the data (24 subjects per cell). Induction checks indicated the manipulations were perceived as intended (e.g., questions dealing with power were answered on a 9 point scale such that those in a high power condition were significantly different, $p < .001$, than those in the low power condition).

A main effect for power was obtained for the behavioral data. Representatives facing a third party with binding power took more time to reach an agreement (25.75 vs. 20.65, $p < .005$), used more bargaining intervals (5.29 vs. 4.39, $p < .005$) and had more deadlocks (8 vs. 4, n.s.). No behavioral reputation main effects were found. In general, spokesmen facing a third party with an unfavorable reputation were influenced to a lesser extent by his power.

The perceptual data also provide consistent support for the third party power hypothesis. Negotiators anticipating a high power third party reported more felt pressure ($p < .06$) as well as more perceived difficulty ($p < .002$).

Overall, the perceptual data provide a consistent pattern of the interplay between power and reputation. By and large, representatives facing a third party with an unfavorable reputation were not differentially influenced by his power. Yet, if the agent had a favorable reputation the level of the power variable consistently made a difference such that the representative felt greater frustration ($p < .004$), dissatisfaction ($p < .002$),

greater opponent stubbornness ($p < .005$), less opponent friendliness ($p < .05$) and liking ($p < .03$), and lower self-ratings of performance ($p < .01$) under high rather than low power conditions.

With regard to attributions, two main effects were observed: representatives anticipating a third party with a favorable reputation felt he would be significantly more competent and possess significantly more group process skill than those agents with an unfavorable reputation. This occurred despite the fact that no attempt was made to induce these perceptions.

Discussion

Contrary to previous studies the present research was able to demonstrate reliable differences in preintervention impact of third party agents who possess differential power. Those anticipating a high power agent took 25 percent longer to reach agreement than those in the low power condition. They also felt more pressure during bargaining. This is consistent with the notion that the possibility of a high power agent "taking over" frees the representatives from a responsibility to compromise (Pruitt & Johnson, 1970). However, with regard to perceptions, numerous significant and consistent interactions between third party power and reputation were also found. They suggest greater problems in reaching a negotiated solution for representatives anticipating a high power agent with a favorable as contrasted to an unfavorable reputation. Explanations for these interactions must remain tentative. Ancillary data rule out differential commitment or satisfaction with a team solution on the part of representatives as possible causes.

It is logical that negotiators had the most bargaining difficulty when anticipating a high power/high reputation third party. The negotiators have a high need to save face and believe this agent to be skilled, thus, they take longer in deliberations. Spokesmen anticipating a low power/high reputation third party had the least difficulty in negotiations. Possibly, negotiators seeing the third party's lack of power, felt that they would have to resolve the conflict on their own and did. It is difficult to explain the negating effect low reputation had on the power manipulation. Subjects in the high power/low reputation condition frequently stated: "they wouldn't have let that person force a solution upon them." No explanation is offered for the low power/low reputation results. It was predicted that subjects anticipating this type of third party would have the least bargaining difficulty, such was not the case.

In sum, this study demonstrates the importance of constituent forces on negotiator behavior as well as highlighting the differential impacts of third party power and reputation on the negotiation process, in the context of high need to save face.

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